

THE MATERIAL BASE

THE PHYSICAL PATTERN OF THE VILLAGE

As a physical site, al-Munsif has five parts (See Fig. 2): The hamlet of Hilwi; the three saints' shrines each of which has been, at one time or another, the nucleus of a small house-cluster, and the village proper. The territory which belongs to the village is roughly triangular in shape. The apex of this triangle is at the eastern extremity of the village proper, the sides extend from the apex to the seashore which forms the base. The paths which lead from the village proper to the shore, via Mar Maama and Mar Mukhail, run along ridge crests. The boundaries of the village lie in the *wadis* (dry stream-beds) which are immediately adjacent to these crests, to the south and the north of them, respectively. All of the real property within the area thus defined belongs to the citizens of the village.

Hilwi owes its existence to its location on a main highway, near a small, sheltered cove, and, possibly, to the two springs which were mentioned in the previous chapter. The development and present significance of this hamlet will be discussed further in Part II. Here we need only mention that Hilwi has the most extensive fig orchards in the village, and, in a small building which is used as a store in summer, there is a public telephone. This is the only electrical appliance of any kind, dependent upon a central public power system, in the entire village. 245
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The shrines will be discussed in the chapter, "Formal Institutions." Of the three, only Mar Mukhail has recently had any significance as a residence site. At present, one family of outsiders lives there in the winter (See next two chapter). It will be noted that the site has a special name, *ʔarqbi*, besides that of the shrine.

The village proper (see map, Fig. 3) is built, as has been noted before, on the flank of a crest, extending in a northwest-southeast direction for the greater part of one kilometer and steadily decreasing in altitude from 280 meters above sea level in the southeast to 180 meters in the northwest. The highest houses in the southeast are virtually on the top of the crest. As the map and figures indicate, the village is also sharply tilted in a northeast-southwest direction. For the most part, the houses, as well as the terraces, are oriented longitudinally along the contours of the ridge. In the section of the village which lies to the south of the main road there is a very full distribution of functioning terraces, but in most of the northern part, terraces are either entirely absent or (except in the eastern extremity) fallen into ruins. In its essential details, this settlement pattern belongs to a type which is commonplace in Lebanon (Thoumin, 1936, p. 283).

202 terial means, which is still used a great deal—shouting from one section of the village to another. The horse and the donkey have given way to the automobile, 474 the bus, the truck, and the paved roads which they require. Two automobiles are stationed in the village, and a number of them are owned by villagers who live in the city. Those in the village are at least fifteen years old. One of the owners operates a regular (about three times a day) taxi service to Jbayl. The Beirut-Tripoli buses regularly stop at Hilwi, but the railroad trains never do. No one in the village owns a truck, but it is not difficult to hire one from Jbayl if necessary.

● 206 In terms of message communication, there are two new elements in the village. One is the public telephone at Hilwi. This does not seem to play a very important part in the life of the community. It is simply one apparatus in the network of telephones which the French Mandatory Government installed along 207 the main highways. The other is the radio. There is one at Hilwi and one in the village proper, both in private houses. A third, portable one was purchased during the period of study. There would doubtless be more if it were not necessary to run them on batteries. However, the villagers keep up to date on the news very efficiently. Every day several people go to and return from Jbayl in whose shops radios blare away constantly.

177.20 In the field of communication, foreign influence has been of profound importance.

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near Aleppo, and at Rayaq and there are many emergency landing fields.

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Sea Ports. Since 1950 Beirut has handled over 2 million tonnage of ships a year; an increase of about a quarter of a million over the pre-war figures. The port has a free zone through which goods are shipped to Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. But the Syrian Government hopes to divert some of the transit trade from Beirut and has, with the assistance of a loan of \$6 million from Saudi Arabia, formed a company to develop Latakia in order to handle about a million tons of goods a year (in 1952 431,593 tons were handled). Work on the extension of the port was begun by a Yugoslav firm in April 1953. Tripoli, Sidon, and Baniyas are ports handling the oil from the pipelines¹ and are little used for other purposes.

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Wireless and Telephones. An automatic telephone exchange system covers most of Syria and an automatic exchange is planned for Beirut. Telephone links with Europe and America are available through Beirut and normal cable facilities exist. The Syrian state broadcasting authority has two large transmitters and broadcasts in Arabic, French, English, and Hebrew. Near Beirut there is a station which broadcasts in Arabic, French, and English.

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The 'Common Interests'

Under the Mandate, Syria and Lebanon formed an economic and customs union, the Higher Council of Common Interests, under the direct control of France, which administered customs and excise and controlled concessionary companies, antiquities, and some other services. On 1 January 1944 the control was transferred to the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. The currencies were linked and interchangeable, and both the Syrian and Lebanese pounds were largely backed by French francs based on a rate of 8.83 to the pound sterling (then worth \$4.03). In order to maintain a good profit on the exchange brought in by oil companies the Lebanese and Syrian pounds were not devalued in 1949 to follow sterling. Exchange was controlled by one department for both countries and the note issue is in the hands of the French Banque de Syrie et du Liban.

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But these links were incompatible with the differences that developed in the economic policies of the two countries when they became independent. Syria, in normal years, has a large exportable surplus of agricultural products and little transit trade, whereas the debtor trade balance of Lebanon is com-

¹ See Appendix IV, p. 570 below.